CRISTALLO
RESORT & SPA
CORTINA D' AMPEZZO

THE
LUXURY
COLLECTION

HISTORY

The Palace Hotel Cristallo was opened in 1901 by Giuseppe Menardi, scion to one of the oldest families in the Cortina d'Ampezzo, and his wife Emilia. At the time, Cortina and its surrounding mountain environs were part of Austria.

The Menardis partnered with architect Gustavo Ghiretti to build their mountain palace on the edge of a forest with panoramic views of the surrounding Dolomite peaks. Inside, the hotel blended the best of Italian architecture with the Art Nouveau touches just coming into vogue at the time. Marble baths, pendant chandeliers and hand-painted walls created rooms as regal as the views outside their windows.

Aristocratic travelers from around the globe flocked to the Cristallo. Then World War One broke out. The Cristallo was converted into a military hospital, and rooms that once hosted royals now hosted soldiers, doctors and nurses. By war's end, the hotel was a shell of its former self in a land now ruled by Italy, but the Menardi family was determined to restore and reopen it.

The Menardis embarked on a restoration and expansion, reviving the hotel's historic flourishes and adding "modern" conveniences like central heating and a private ski slope. Shortly after reopening in the '20s, the hotel also added an outdoor swimming pool and tennis courts to make it more of a year-round destination. Once again, the Cristallo was the crown jewel of the Cortina region, welcoming Italian dukes and Belgian kings, French princesses and Egyptian sultans during the winter, spring, summer and fall.

This golden age was short lived. World War Two soon consumed Europe and transformed the hotel once again into a military installation. At the war's end, the Cristallo was barely standing. This time, the job of rebuilding fell to Giuseppe and Emilia's son, Leo Menardi. Together with his wife Ofelia Zardini, Leo brought the hotel's original finishes back to glorious life and expanded its facilities to include a hair salon, card room and ski storage space. The Cristallo entered the '50s as a five-star destination, once again drawing a who's who of world personalities, among them the writers Saul Bellow and Vladimir Nabokov.

Leo Menardi also worked hard to position Cortina d'Ampezza as a world class sporting destination. He introduced hockey, curling and bob sledding to the area and promoted the Dolomite Gold Cup F1 car

race that lured the first Ferraris to the Alps. His efforts helped win Cortina the 1956 Winter Olympics. Soon people around the globe new the region and knew the best place to stay while there was the Cristallo.

In the '60s, the Cristallo was handed down to the next generation of the Menardi family. In the capable hands of Rinaldo Menardi the Cristallo retained its historic luxury while embracing the dolce vita spirit of the times. The resort's new Monkey Club imported London DJs and attracted the young jet set eager to indulge champagne toasts. And the resort itself became a Hollywood film set, starring alongside Frank Sinatra in *Von Ryan Express* and Peter Sellars in *The Pink Panther*.

The Cristallo remained one of the world's most famous and favored destinations until the late 1970s, when it was sold to a large hotel chain. As the resort's unique luxuries and personalized services were replaced with standard hotel amenities and programs, the guest list began to dwindle. By the early '90s, the Cristallo closed. But its legend lived on in the stories of the travelers who'd made the Cristallo their second home; their place to celebrate birthdays, weddings and anniversaries; the spot where they rubbed elbows with authors, artists, athletes and kings.

These remembrances reached the ears of Bologna entrepreneur Paolo Gualandi, who bought the hotel in 1995. Gualandi restored the property's historic details and revived its legendary services while also adding amenities to appeal to new generations of travelers. The main building was expanded to house a vast spa and wellness center for guests enjoyment.

In July 2001, the Cristallo was reintroduced to the world as the Cristallo Hotel Spa & Golf Resort. Under the careful management of the Gualandi family, the Cristallo once again rose to 5-star status and began sweeping the travel awards. The World Travel Awards named the Cristallo the best Italian ski resort five times between 2005 and 2010 and the Best European Ski Resort in 2007 and 2009. TripAdvisor awarded the property a Certificate of Excellence in 2012. In 2016, the resort celebrated its 115th anniversary and in 2017, after an extensive renovation, it became a member of the prestigious The Luxury Collection, the world's premier portfolio of uniquely historic and upscale destinations.